



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **APHIS Holds National Employee Meeting on Animal Welfare**

WASHINGTON, April 27, 2010 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) held a national meeting for all of its employees responsible for providing leadership on humane care and treatment of animals. The four-day meeting was an opportunity to gather APHIS' geographically-dispersed animal care staff together and improve day-to-day operations by reinforcing performance standards, streamlining inspection procedures and improving communication.

Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan delivered the keynote speech, setting the tone for a successful meeting that included training sessions, information on best practices and discussion on the animal care (AC) program's new inspection requirements handbook. The handbook, distributed to all employees, will serve as an essential resource to ensure that inspectors in every state conduct inspections and address non-compliance in the same way.

More information on the national meeting is available on APHIS' Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/index.shtml). This portion of the Web site has recently been reorganized to provide its stakeholders and the general public with the best and most easily accessible information. The goal of the new Web site is to make it easy for both stakeholders and first-time visitors to the site to learn about APHIS' AC program and find the specific information they are seeking. The site features information and data previously contained in animal care's annual report, as well as all inspection reports and research facility annual reports.

Animal care provides leadership for determining standards of humane care and treatment for animals, except those animals that are raised for food or fiber. AC employs more than 120 inspectors nationwide who are responsible for performing the bulk of inspections to support enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act. AC also employs specialists who have specific expertise and experience with birds, elephants, marine mammals, exotic cats, and non-human primates.

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